

Chapter One – I-66 Somerset to London Project Introduction



INTERSTATE 66 PROJECT HISTORY AND DECISION MAKING

1.1 Project Establishment

1.1.1 What are the Origins of the I-66 Project?

In 1991 Congress enacted the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) which provides federal assistance for highway studies, design, and construction, and contains policy to develop a National Intermodal Transportation System that is economically efficient and environmentally sound, provides the foundation for the Nation to compete in the global economy, and will move people and goods in an energy efficient manner. The ISTEA included a legislative mandate by Congress providing funding for an “Interstate 66 Feasibility Study” (also known as the Transamerica Transportation Corridor Feasibility Study) in 1991 to evaluate a new interstate corridor generally located between I-70 to the north and I-40 to the south. The Transamerica Corridor was listed as a High Priority Corridor on the National Highway System¹ because Congress finds that construction would:

- connect major population centers and greatly enhance economic growth
- serve the travel and economic development needs of the region
- improve the efficiency and safety of commerce and travel which would further improve economic development²

The High Priority Corridors (as of March 2004) are shown in Figure 1.1.1-1.

The Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) signed in August 2005, includes the designations for improvements to existing facilities, the construction of new facilities for I-66, and for facilities providing connectivity with the Transamerica Corridor.

1.2 Transamerica Corridor Study

1.2.1 What Alternatives Did the Completed 1994 Transamerica Transportation Corridor Feasibility Study³ Analyze?

¹www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep10/nhs/hipricorridors/hpcor.html
²www.house.gov/transportation/highway/compilations/istea91_.pdf
³ Transamerica Transportation Corridor Feasibility Study, 1994, WSA, HNTB

The study investigated a wide range of alternatives and assessed each in terms of consistency with national policy and meeting the goals of ISTEA, which is:

“to develop a National Intermodal Transportation System that is economically efficient and environmentally sound, provides the foundation for the nation to compete in the global economy, and will move people and goods in an energy efficient manner.”

The range of alternatives investigated included three basic categories: *1. Mode and technology options* (The mode and technology options were further grouped into three categories: a. Highway options, b. Fixed guideway options, and c. Multimodal options), *2. Joint use options*, and *3. Corridor options*.

Alternatives considered included: Conventional Interstate-Type Highway, Super-Highway, Truckway, Advanced Tollway, Parkway, Conventional Railroads, Upgraded Railroads, Conventional Rail Upgrade with Increased Speed Capabilities, High Speed Rail Line, Very High Speed New Technology Rail, Combination Conventional Highway with Conventional or Upgraded Rail, Super-Highway with High Speed Rail, Conventional Interstate with Truckway, Super-Highway with Truckway and Joint use opportunities that utilize pipelines in the right-of-way of the multimodal options above.

From these initial transportation concepts, and through the screening process, four principal alternatives and a corridor location were determined to have features that enhanced the viability of the Transamerica Corridor. The four alternatives included: 1. Conventional Interstate-Type Highway, 2. Upgraded Rail, 3. Super-Highway with Truckway, and 4. Very High Speed Fixed Guideway.

1.2.2 What Were the Conclusions of the Transamerica Corridor Study?

The study concluded that the corridor concept is compatible with the ideas proposed in the ISTEA, but that currently a transcontinental route is not feasible. The study states that further evaluation may show that some segments of the Transamerica Corridor could represent a good investment and could be of beneficial from a state or regional perspective. The study

estimated the economic development gains that would occur as a result of the Transamerica Transportation Corridor and concluded that the economic gains from the corridor perspective were significant.

The study concluded that from an economic analysis perspective, the highway and super-highway alternatives are the most likely candidates to achieve economic feasibility and even under considerably improved circumstances, the rail alternatives would not be feasible from an economic standpoint.

1.3 Kentucky Transportation Center Southern Kentucky Corridor Feasibility Study

The Kentucky Segment of the Coast-to-Coast I-66 Transamerica Corridor Study stated that segments of the Transamerica Corridor could be economically feasible as well as beneficial for individual segments of the transcontinental corridor. In 1997 the Kentucky Transportation Center prepared an Economic Justification and Financial Feasibility Study for the Southern Kentucky segment of the Transamerica Corridor. The purpose of the report, entitled Southern Kentucky Corridor I-66 Economic Justification and Financial Feasibility⁴ (SKC I-66), was to determine the economic justification and financial feasibility of the Kentucky segment of the Transamerica Transportation Corridor.

1.3.1 What Were the Conclusions of the SKC I-66 Study?

The study investigated the existing economic conditions of the 63 counties within the SKC I-66 corridor and found that many are economically distressed. The per capita income of the corridor region was \$4,500 below levels in other parts of the state. The unemployment rate in the corridor region was 6.8% compared to 4.7% for non-corridor counties.

1.3.2 Economic Development

The study concluded that improved access to the SKC would result in economic development impacts that would include the increase in earnings, jobs, income and population. These impacts are particularly important for the corridor because of the existing

⁴ Southern Kentucky Corridor I-66 Economic Justification and Financial Feasibility, 1997, Kentucky Transportation Center

economic conditions throughout the corridor region. Quality of Life benefits are also predicted to improve through increased access to key institutions such as employment centers, schools, medical care, recreation facilities and governmental services.

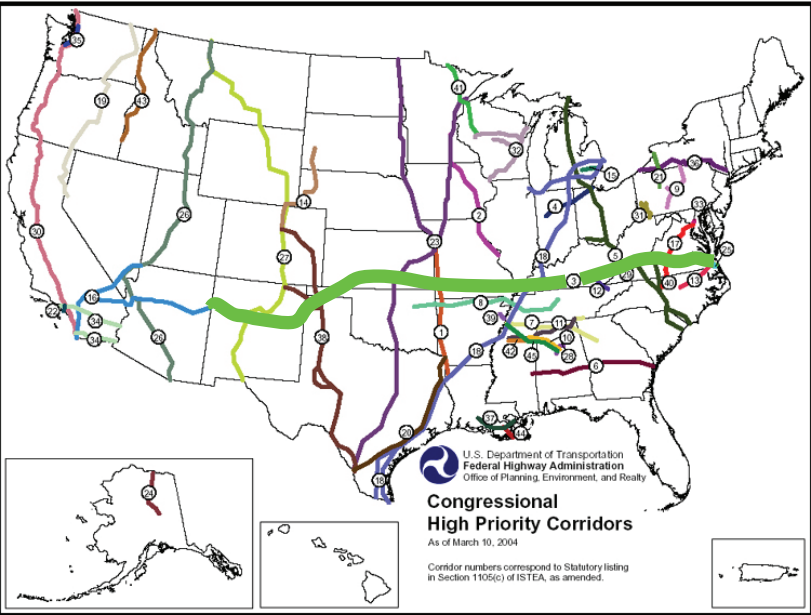


Figure 1.1.1-1 Congressional High Priority Corridors Corridor 3 – Interstate 66

From 1.1 - (1991) The ISTEA included a legislative mandate by Congress providing funding for an “Interstate 66 Feasibility Study” and established High Priority Corridors throughout the nation.

From 1.2 - (1994) Transamerica Corridor Study concludes that, while not feasible nationally, economic gains from a regional corridor perspective would be significant.

From 1.3 - (1997) The study concludes that improved access to the SKC would result in economic development impacts that would include the increase in: earnings, jobs, income and population. These impacts are particularly important for the corridor because of the existing economic conditions throughout the corridor region. The study recommends the Somerset to London segment of I-66 as the highest priority segment.

1.3.3 Economic Benefits

The SKC I-66 economic study concluded that a major highway improvement in the SKC corridor would be expected to generate from 48,300 to 63,800 person-years of work per year. This represents a 5.9 to 7.9 percent increase in expected employment for the 20-year period after the SKC I-66 is open to traffic. New manufacturing jobs alone are expected to account for 30% of all new jobs (14,490 to 19,140 person-years of work), substantially increasing the number of manufacturing jobs in Kentucky. Personal earnings are expected to increase between \$1.4 billion to \$1.9 billion per year, representing a 6.4% to 8.7% increase in expected earnings per year for the 2005 to 2025 time period if the SKC portion of I-66 is built. Section 7.3.1 of the Southern Kentucky Corridor I-66 Economic Justification and Financial Feasibility Study further describes the proposed benefits of a Kentucky corridor. The improved transportation system would enhance regionalism by reducing driving time between communities. Improved regionalism is a crucial factor in improving incomes, poverty rates, and overall quality of life. Table 1.3.3-1 (reproduced from the SKC I-66 feasibility study) shows the economic benefits to the corridor, should I-66 be constructed through Kentucky.

1.3.4 Cost Benefit Analysis

The economic justification of the SKC was examined by comparing the benefits and costs. When benefits to road users exceed the cost of providing the facility, the project is determined to be justified. Time savings, increased safety and reduced vehicle operating costs as a result of diverting traffic from other highways to the I-66 corridor were calculated in the study. At a 4% discount rate (reasonable and based on the real rate of return on investments after adjustment for inflation) it was concluded that the benefit/cost ratio exceeded 1.00 (justified) for all alternatives having a 70 mile per hour design speed⁵. When the increase in wages in the corridor was factored in, the benefits of constructing I-66 through Southern Kentucky were four times greater than costs.

1.3.5 Priority Segments

The SKC I-66 identified priority segments for construction due to the large financial commitment

⁵ For more detailed information on analysis see Pages 26-36 of 1997 Feasibility Study

that would be required to construct the entire facility. By identifying segments which could link major existing highways, large continuous segments of I-66 could be quickly created with a reduction in financial challenges. The study identified the segment between Somerset and London as the highest priority segment because it would provide a continuous interstate-type highway linking I-75 and I-65. The priority segments identified in the SKC I-66 study are shown in figure 1.3.5-1.

1.4 Southern Kentucky Corridor Planning Study

The SKC I-66 study identified the Somerset to London segment of I-66 as the highest priority segment I-66 across the state of Kentucky. In June 2000 the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet published a planning study entitled *I-66 Southern Kentucky Corridor*⁶.

1.4.1 What Was the Purpose of the Southern Kentucky Corridor Study?

The purpose of the study was to identify: areas of concern, benefits of the proposed facility, public input and an environmental footprint from known documentation. The study evaluated corridor alternatives and provided recommendations for future project development activities for the Somerset to London corridor based on the evaluated criteria. The study developed recommendations at a corridor level, based on existing topography, environmental features, traffic needs, socioeconomic factors, estimated costs and engineering judgment.

1.4.2 What Were the Conclusions of The Southern Kentucky Corridor Study?

This *I-66 Southern Kentucky Corridor* study identified the Somerset to London segment of the Transamerica Corridor (I-66)/Southern Kentucky Corridor as a high priority segment for the following reasons:

- Growing traffic volumes in the region between Somerset and London.

⁶ I-66 Southern Kentucky Corridor between the Louie B. Nunn (Cumberland) and Daniel Boone Parkways, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, June 2000

- Truck traffic in the area adding to safety concerns, since many of the two lane routes have substandard geometrics, such as narrow lane and shoulder widths and insufficient passing zones.
- An “interstate-type” facility would provide an improved, efficient interstate route which would connect the Cumberland and Hal Rogers Parkways (formally Daniel Boone Parkway) linking Interstate 75 with Interstate 65.
- The need for increased accessibility and mobility to facilitate economic growth and development in southeastern Kentucky.

The study concluded with a recommendation for further consideration of the N4 alternate. The studied corridors and the recommended corridors are shown in figure 1.4.2-1 on the following page.

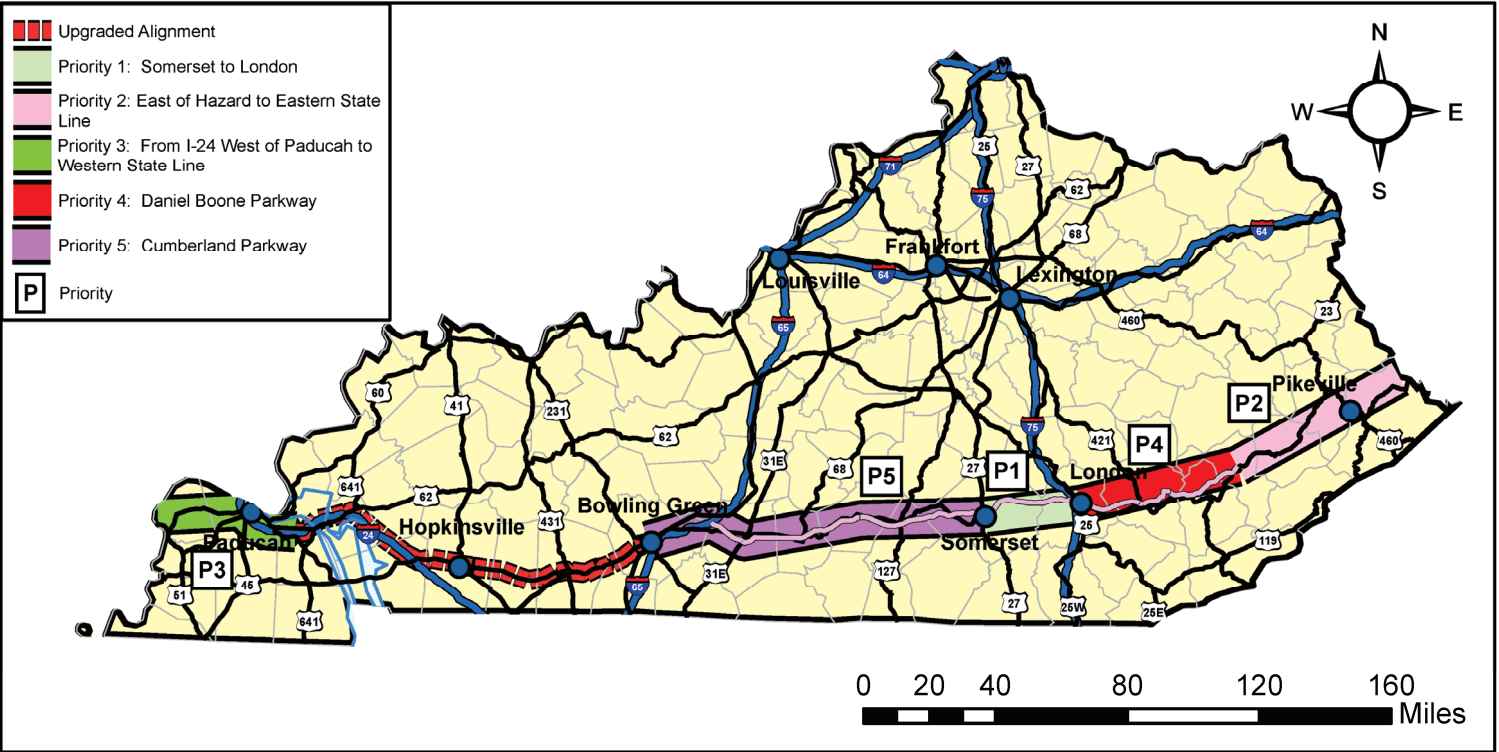
From 1.4 (2000) The Southern Kentucky Corridor Study investigates the areas of concern for the high priority Somerset to London segment of I-66. The study evaluates economic, environmental, public input and engineering factors to make corridor recommendations. The study recommends the “N4” corridor.

Table 1.3.3-1 – Economic Benefits of Interstate 66

Average Annual Employment, Earnings, Total Income, and Output Impacts of Interstate 66 (in Billions of 199x Dollars) By Speed and Design Option: 2005-2025					
Highway Corridor Region					
Speed km/h (mph)	Route ¹	Employment (1995\$s)	Earnings Total (1995\$s)	Personal Income (1995\$s)	Output (1992\$s)
100 (60)	A	51,906	1.60	2.20	3.54
100 (60)	B	51,646	1.58	2.21	3.51
100 (60)	C	48,362	1.47	2.09	3.36
100 (60)	D	51,333	1.55	2.14	3.54
110 (70)	A	58,171	1.78	2.35	3.93
110 (70)	B	57,323	1.75	2.35	3.89
110 (70)	C	54,798	1.65	2.24	3.77
110 (70)	D	55,653	1.68	2.24	3.82
130 (80)	A	62,524	1.91	2.47	4.23
130 (80)	B	63,873	1.94	2.52	4.29
130 (80)	C	60,700	1.83	2.40	4.16
130 (80)	D	60,520	1.82	2.37	4.15

¹Routes A-D are the same east of Hopkinsville. Route A exits Kentucky at Paducah. Route B travels south of Paducah and crosses the Mississippi River at Wickliffe. Route C passes through Mayfield before exiting Kentucky at Wickliffe. Route D passes through Land Between the Lakes and Mayfield before exiting Kentucky at Wickliffe.
Source: Calculated by the Center for Business and Economic Research, University of Kentucky.

Figure 1.3.5-1 – Priority Segments Order for I-66 from SKC-I-66 Corridor Study



1.5 Public Involvement in the Decision Making Process

1.5.1 How Was the Public Involved in Planning Decisions That Led Up to This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

The 1997 Kentucky Transportation Center Southern Kentucky Corridor Feasibility Study³ invited public involvement throughout the process. Press releases and newsletters were used to inform the public of the development of the study. An advisory committee, comprised of representatives from the area development districts, federal and state government agencies, elected local officials, three adjacent states, and other interests, held regional meetings to keep the public informed of the study activities and progress. Presentations were also made to the transportation committees of each area development district along the corridor.

The I-66 Southern Kentucky Corridor Study⁴ had public involvement throughout the course of the study development. Local citizens, public officials and representatives from government resource agencies were given opportunities to provide input on the proposed corridors and issues of relevance to the study. The public was involved through questionnaires, comments opportunities, public meetings, advertisement in local newspapers, flyers and notices on television cable access channels. The corridor alternatives were expanded to ten due to public participation and input from all communication methods was considered in the final alternative recommendation.

1.5.2 How Has the Public Been Involved in the Development of the Draft EIS?

The public has been involved through Citizen’s Advisory Groups, Public Meetings and various public communications tools. The public involvement in this Draft EIS is detailed in chapter 8 of this document.

1.5.3 Now That the Draft EIS is Published, Is It Too Late to Get Involved?

The public involvement process does not end with the Draft EIS. There will be both short term and long term opportunities to comment and participate in the I-66 project. Methods and opportunities to comment on

this document, or the project are outlined in the box to the right.

1.6 Future Decisions

1.6.1 Who Will Decide Which Alternative is Selected?

The lead agencies on this project are the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The KYTC and FHWA will collaborate regarding alternative selection, with the final decision made by FHWA. However, their decision will consider both technical information and community input. *You are invited to participate in this project by reviewing this Draft EIS, attending public meetings and providing your comments on the information presented. The input you provide will be considered during the development of a preferred alternative. The KYTC and FHWA will consider and respond to all substantive comments received on this DEIS, including those from public hearings. The Final EIS will include the comments made and the agencies’ responses.*

1.7 Supporting Documentation to the DEIS

1.7.1 Where Can I View Supporting Documentation Referenced in this DEIS?

The purpose of this document is to communicate the project purpose and need, the alternatives under consideration and the project related impacts. The project related impacts given in this document are a summary of the substantial quantities of data gathered and reported in the technical baseline reports. Supporting documentation is available for viewing for those parties interested in further detail pertaining to the analysis of the proposed project.

Supporting documentation, such as the feasibility studies; planning studies and technical baseline reports, referenced throughout this DEIS are available for viewing at the KYTC project office at right or at the KYTC Central Office/Division of Environmental Analysis located at 200 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY 40622.

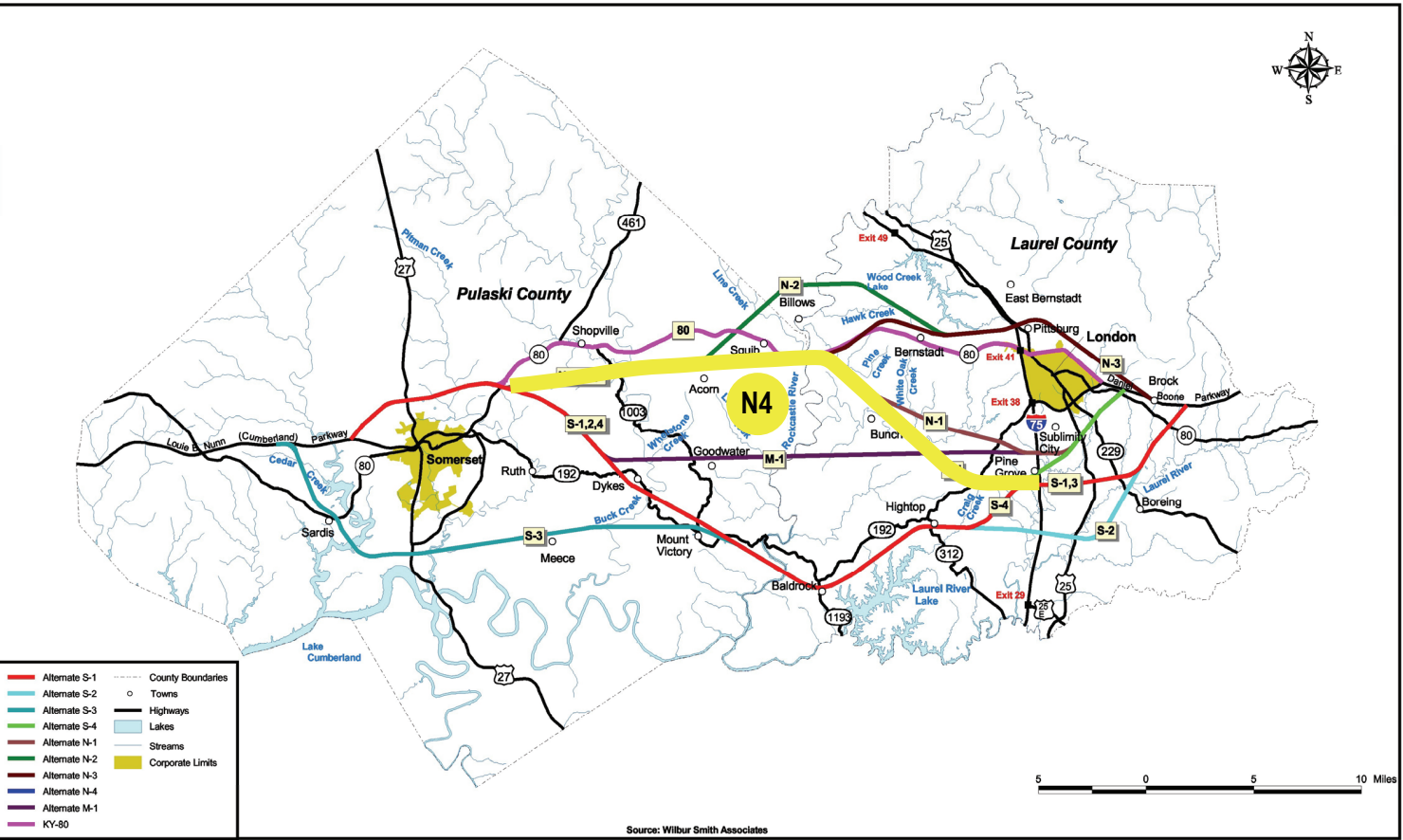


Figure 1.4.2-1 – Corridors from the I-66 Southern Kentucky Corridor Study, including the recommended “N4” corridor.

How Can I Learn More About the Project and Provide Input?

There are several ways you can submit your comments or learn more about the project.

Public Hearings

You are invited to attend the public hearings listed below:

Monday, August 7th, 2006
London Community Center
529 S. Main St, London, KY
5:00pm – 8:00pm; Formal Session 6:30

Tuesday, August 8th, 2006
The Center for Rural Development
2292 S. HWY 27, Somerset, KY
5:00pm – 8:00pm; Formal Session 6:30

Phone, Website and e-mail

To learn more about the project or submit your comments on the Draft EIS by phone, call 606.677.4017, or visit the project website at www.interstate66.com. Comments can be sent via e-mail to: Joe.Cox@ky.gov

Mailing Address

You can send written comments to the address below.

Department of Highways – District 8
Attn: Joe Cox
P.O. Box 780 – 1660 S. US 27
Somerset, KY 42502

Your comments on the Draft EIS must be received by 12:00 (Noon) on October 9th, 2006 to be considered.